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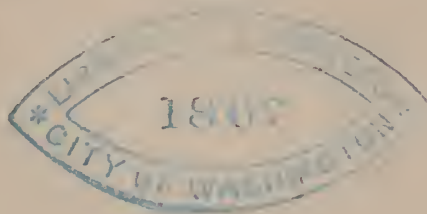
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HOURS WITH THE LORD.

L. F. F.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF THEREMIN.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isa. i. 18.



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THEREMIN, in an article upon devotional literature, says: "There is an important gap to be filled in religious literature, by the publication of real prayers, remembered and written out, with the suppression of what is too private and individual. The following papers, which I term 'Conversations of the Soul with the Lord,' are to be regarded from this point of view."
— *Abend Stundēn von Dr. Franz Theremin*, p. 491.



HOURS WITH THE LORD.



CHAPTER I.

DISINCLINATION TO PRAYER.

“ We kneel, how weak ! We rise, how full of power !
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others, — that we are not always strong,

That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak or heartless be,

Anxious or troubled, — when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee ! ”

TRENCH.

FROM Thee alone, O Lord, I receive
every good thing ; but I must come
to Thee and take it. I must draw nigh
to Thee and address Thee.

When I do not pray, a heavy load
lies upon my heart ; and trifling, even
happy occurrences seem like omens of
approaching trouble ; slight obstacles in
my path loom up before me like moun-

tains. I cannot endure myself, nor others; my vision into heaven and the invisible world is clouded; my departed friends seem lost to me. But as soon as I begin to seek Thee again, and to talk with Thee, the burden under which my heart groaned, is taken away; every thing looks bright, and indicates future peace and joy. I go to my work cheerfully, and hope that it will prosper through Thine aid. I still sigh about myself; but I have patience with my own infirmities, and am not chafed and pained by those of others. Heaven is open to me again, and I can speak with Thee, and also with those dear friends who are with Thee there.

It is, however, a bitter reproach and sorrow to me that I so seldom seek Thy face, and pour out my heart in communion with Thee, although I receive such great mercies by so doing. When the pressure of work, and of society keeps me from raising a glance or a

thought to heaven, then I cry,—O sweet solitude! O blessed leisure! when ye are mine again, how will I refresh my heart by communing with the Lord! Leisure is granted me; solitude opens her arms to me; Thou, Thyself, O Lord, knockest at the door of my heart, and remindest me of my promise. But I scarcely open it to Thee; I say to Thee a few cold measured words, such as one speaks from a sense of propriety, not from the impulse of the heart.

Yes, Lord, my heart bows with shame as I confess to Thee that I feel a dislike, a fear, which I need to conquer before I can talk with Thee. O God! intercourse with my fellow-men is so sweet to me, how can I be afraid to talk with Thee? I often frequent the society of men for pleasure, and I seek Thy face only because my duty constrains me! Have I ever experienced from Thee the coldness, the hardness, the enmity which I

have often received from men ? Hast Thou ever repulsed me ; hast Thou not always lovingly received me, even when I had been long estranged from Thee ? Hast Thou ever refused to forgive me when Thou sawest me bowed down by my sins ? Hast Thou not always comforted me in my failures ? Hast Thou not always given me Thy friendly counsel how to begin anew to order my life so that I might free myself from them, more and more ?

What is it then, Lord, which raises this barrier between me and Thee, and keeps me out of Thy presence ?

Alas ! It is my own earthly mind, my depravity, which is afraid of Divine Love, even when it shines most brightly upon me ; and would rather stoop to the basest things which injure me, and will bring upon me severe penalties, in return for the preference I give them.

Lord, I will no longer permit this

heavy, hurtful clog, which weighs upon my soul, to draw me down to earth, and keep me far from Thee ; I will resist it ; I will use the wings which Thou hast lent my spirit, with which it is possible for it to soar to Thee. As soon as I try and exercise my will, I succeed through Thy grace. Even now, I have tried, I have willed. I do not say, Lord, that I have wholly succeeded, that I have spoken to Thee such words as Thy chosen speak. Poor and meagre have my words been, as my heart is poor and needy ; but they have not been without a blessing ; for when I began to speak to Thee, I was oppressed with sorrow and anxiety ; but as I spoke, my heart was lightened and expanded, and very nearly attained a feeling of perfect peace and rest.

Ought I to fight my way to this rest, this sense of perfect peace, O Lord ? No, I need not. I must find my way to it by communing with Thee by

prayer. As a cause of trouble arises, I must take it and submit it to Thee ; it will either vanish, or else the pain which it causes will be much lessened, and be good for me.

If I thus pass my earthly life communing with Thee, when I have finished my pilgrimage, and Thou hast received me into heaven, then shall I begin an eternal, uninterrupted communion with Thee concerning things, not of sorrow and pain, but of joy and delight. What blessed communing that will be !





CHAPTER II.

THE LORD DRAWS THE SOUL TO HIMSELF.

“ His love of us may teach us how
To love Him in return.
Love cannot help but grow more free
The more its transports burn.
Oh, who can tell how Jesus oft
His secret thirst will slake
On those strange freedoms, childlike hearts
Are taught by God to take.”

FABER.

I THANK Thee, O Lord, that it becomes more and more habitual and necessary to me to turn my thoughts to Thee; to place myself at Thy feet and to speak to Thee, not in studied words, but with the sighs of my inmost heart.

I thank Thee for this as Thy gift. From my earliest days I have yearned for something which would wholly satisfy me, in which I could rest en-

tirely ; this is indeed the universal longing of humanity, but without Thy guidance it can never be satisfied. The pearl of price, even Thou, can be found, but it lies hidden in the sands of the sea, and the sea is vast and the sands are innumerable. Thou knowest how often I have gone astray, seeking for things not in conformity with Thy will. But Thou didst stretch out Thy mighty hand, Thou didst lead me, while I thought that I walked alone, and didst bring me into the right way. Thou didst open mine eyes, as those of the blind man of old, and didst let fall upon them such mild rays of glory, that I am constrained to seek Thee continually.

At first I did not seek Thee aright, for I remember that I was satisfied with realizing, not Thyself, but Thine image, and that I only strove for that when attacked by the enemy with unusual violence.

Thou, who wilt accept the feeblest spark of devotion to Thee, didst keep me from sin, but withheld Thy true *peace*.

If I do not now possess it perfectly, I have come much nearer to it, since I have sought in Thee, not Thy gift, but Thyself; and did not wait for a time of need to speak to Thee; and then instead of worshipping Thine image have turned unto Thyself. How childish we are to think that Thou art present in an image conjured up to itself by the mind, and not to believe in Thy real presence with us!

Since I have thus communed with Thee, I have experienced a deep peace, which, although interrupted by moments of distress, has never been broken for any length of time.

Many things have befallen me, as Thou knowest, dear Lord, which I could not well have borne hadst Thou not strengthened me in these closet hours.

The Lord. “I am faithful and will not let my sheep be tempted above that they are able, but will put so speedy an end to the temptation, that they may endure it.”

The Soul. “Behold I have taken upon myself to talk with the Lord, although I am dust and ashes. I would now ask something of Thee, if it please Thee.”

The Lord. “Speak.”

The Soul. “Thou hast brought me near to Thee; but Thou hast brought it to pass by taking from me almost every thing that I had. Whatever I thought that I might depend upon, Thou didst always come and take it from me, and destroy it. And so Thou doest continually. Much that Thou hast taken was injurious to me, and I do not regret it; but there was much which I might have enjoyed without harm, using it to Thine honor; but even this Thou didst not leave.”

The Lord. “Thou doest well to utter all the thoughts of thy heart to me, for I will have them all told, although I knew them before. Yet what thou sayest now is prompted rather by self-will than by love for me. I ask thee now, am I more to thee than all else, or is there any thing which thou desirest more than me ? ”

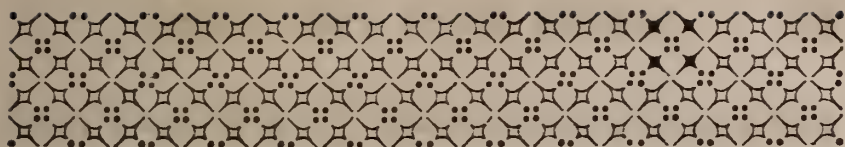
The Soul. “I think, Lord, that nothing in the world can be dearer to me than Thou art. If there is any thing dearer to me, grant me strength to sacrifice it to Thee.”

The Lord. “Tell me, furthermore ; have I ever taken any thing from thee, without giving thee a larger portion in me ? ”

The Soul. “Even so, Lord ! Thou keepest truth in Thy words, and remainest pure when Thou art judged. I thank Thee that Thou hast hidden my folly, and corrected me so gently. He that truly loveth Thee, must be

happy in possessing Thee alone, should he go without the whole world. What need I more ! Thou hast deigned once more to hearken unto me, and to speak with me. It is sweet to talk with Thee rather than with men ; for sometimes their words leave the heart cold and wounded, and sometimes they intoxicate it with flattery and dangerous praise. But when we talk with Thee, our hearts are never chilled, but are satisfied with Thy love, and although humbled, are also made light and glad. Thanks be to Thee, O Lord ! ”





CHAPTER III.

THE HIDING OF THE LORD'S FACE.

“ If this drear change be Thine, O Lord!

 If it be Thy secret will,
Spare not, but to the very brim
 The bitter chalice fill.

But if it hath been sin of mine,
 Oh show that sin to me;
Not to get back the sweetness lost,
 But to make peace with Thee.”

FABER.

THE SOUL. “ Graciously hearken to me, Lord, and if I err in my complaint, oh correct me! Lo, I have often asked Thee for things important to my spiritual welfare, and to that of others. Thou hast given them after many years of anxiety and sorrow. Often must Thy believing children suffer for their little faults much greater punishments, both external and internal, than the despisers of Thy mercy receive

for much greater sins ; and if they raise their eyes to comfort themselves with a glance at Thee, a cloud rests upon Thy face, so that they cannot see Thee. What can they think at such times ; what can be said to comfort them ? Must we tell them that Thou lovest them no less in those dark hours than in those only too rare moments when Thy face beams upon them most brightly, and the fulness of Thy spiritual gift descends upon them ? ”

The Lord. “ Let them gaze upon my Cross, then shall they understand me.”

The Soul. “ Verily, Lord, if we think upon Thy Cross, and upon the sufferings which Thou tookest upon Thee, our hearts must be filled with a sense of Thy love. We can see also that Thou dost not always show this love by granting earthly treasures which might be hurtful to us. But often the heart longs for spiritual comforts, and

yet is not refreshed. It is often disquieted by unworldly cares, concerning the soul, and must wait in darkness for years, without being cheered by one ray of hope. How does this accord with Thy love, O Lord ! ”

The Lord. “ It does accord with it. Because I love my own I cannot do otherwise. I withdraw from them spiritual refreshment, which might be injurious to them.”

The Soul. “ Spiritual refreshment, Lord, and yet *hurtful* ; how can that be possible ? ”

The Lord. “ When John and James desired to draw down fire upon the Samaritan village, they were under such excitement that they forgot of what Spirit they were children. When Peter assured me that he would go with me even to death, there was real emotion in his heart — but, soon after, he denied me.”

The Soul. “ So in this life of temp-

tation, even holy enthusiasm may become a snare, and the safest condition may be dryness and barrenness of spirit."

The Lord. "Even so."

The Soul. "But if we ask not for enthusiasm, but for one small drop of refreshment in the time of distress, one ray of hope in the dark night of sorrow, couldst Thou not always grant that?"

The Lord. "I will ask thee something. Which of these two is the most worthy: he who looks to me for the consolation, of which having received, he hopes still to receive; or he who perseveres in seeking me for years without receiving consolation?"

The Soul. "The latter, doubtless."

The Lord. "I must try in the fire those that are mine, that they may be perfect. My heart is often ready to break, seeing their spiritual poverty, but I keep back the gifts I would gladly grant them, because they would harm

them, or because their absence is more useful to them than their possession would be."

The Soul. "Then Thou art often different from what we are allowed to see Thee to be?"

The Lord. "Yes, and in my sojourn on earth, thou canst find many examples of it."

The Soul. "Yes, Lord, I remember how Thou didst come to Emmaus with the two disciples. Thou didst make as if Thou wouldst go farther, as Thy Word tells us. It was Thy purpose to remain, but Thou wouldst be bidden to do so. When the Canaanitish woman followed Thee with cries and prayers, Thou didst show Thyself strange, almost hard unto her, but it was only that she might be the more exalted. Toward Thine own mother Thou didst show but little outward tenderness, hiding Thy love, whilst Thou saidst, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' We

may then venture to think that Thou dost still hide Thyself at times. Thy disguisements are very different from those of men. Men conceal the evil and show the good. But Thou concealest the best, Thy love, and showest to us only what seems a lesser good, though all is equally good in Thy sight. May we say this, O Lord, and may I, when I find Thee deaf to my prayers, and chary of Thy favors, may I say to myself that Thou dost still heartily love me, and that this is but the hiding of Thy face ? ”

The Lord. “ Thou mayest.”

The Soul. “ Wilt Thou never cease to hide Thy face ? ”

The Lord. “ Yes, in heaven ; there I will hide myself no more, but will appear unto thee and to all the saints, as I am.”



CHAPTER IV.

ANXIETY FOR FRIENDS.

“My times are in Thy hand
My God, I'd have them there;
My life, my friends, my soul, I leave
Entirely to Thy care.”

THE SOUL. “O Lord! I receive great comfort from Thy bleeding death upon the Cross, and from the promises of Thy Word, when I am assailed by the ordinary cares of life; but I have not found definite words of consolation for all the troubles which at times torment me.

“Thou hast given me peace as to my own salvation by saying that Thou wilt reject none who come to Thee; and as I know that I have come to Thee, and entered Thy service in faith, I can feel sure that Thou wilt not cast me out. But Thou who hast commanded me to

love my neighbor as myself, dost surely intend that I should care for his soul ; and if I see my neighbor neither caring for Thee nor for the way of salvation, but walking in the broad road which leadeth to destruction, where do I find a single word of Thine, which I can take to soothe my anxiety ? Who can tell me whether a moment will come in his whole life or even in his death, when he will be awakened to seek Thee ? Do I know whether he will accept or reject Thy help ; whether Thou wilt wish to constrain him ; whether he will let himself be constrained by Thy love ! Often have I pondered in sadness over the dark riddle of man's final destiny ; it is impossible to say how much it is influenced by the direct grace of God, and how much through the agency of man.

“ I will suppose that a friend, for whose soul I have been anxious during his life, has died without giving, to my

knowledge, any distinct sign of conversion. May I think of him as belonging to Thy chosen people whom Thou hast delivered from darkness, or must I leave the matter doubtful? If I feel that there is no answer to my doubts, how can I, loving this departed friend, ever be happy? ”

The Lord. “ I have given thee in my Word all that is necessary for thy salvation. I never intended to change thy faith into sight, and raise thee above all conflicts of mind. Still if thou art strong in faith, and wilt fight bravely, thou shalt conquer all care.”

The Soul. “ And how can I conquer this anxiety for the salvation of those who are dear to me, and do not care for it themselves? ”

The Lord. “ Thou shalt recall the words of my apostle James : ‘ Casting all your care upon Him.’ I have said to thee by his mouth ‘ *all* your cares ;’

how could I have excepted just the one which I knew would press most heavily upon thee ? ”

The Soul. “ Thou puttest my faith to a hard proof, dear Lord ! Give me grace to stand.”

The Lord. “ When that father brought to me his lunatic son, I did not ask the child if he could believe, for it would have been vain to speak to him of faith. I said to the father — ‘ If thou canst believe.’ ”

The Soul. “ Dost Thou mean that the faith of one can help another to be saved ? ”

The Lord. “ Why not, if he prays in faith ? have I not promised to hear every prayer in my name ? surely this also ! ”

The Soul. “ Then I may feel at rest while my friend lives. But if he dies, and I know nothing certainly about his conversion, or whither he is gone, and so stand by his corpse and gaze

into the depths of Thy righteousness, with the darkness of Thy counsels, O Lord ! Lord ! ”

The Lord. “ And wilt thou not gaze into another depth which is still deeper, — the depth of my love ? Dost thou think that thou lovedst the departed more than I ? Know then, that thy love toward him is nothing compared with mine ? Moreover, my love is omnipotent. If I delay the regeneration of a soul, I have not, therefore, given it up. What I did not for him in his lifetime I am able to do in the hour of death. Only believe firmly in me, and thou shalt conquer this remaining care.”





CHAPTER V.

ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF A FRIEND'S DEATH.

“Haste thee on from grave to glory,
Arm'd with faith, and wing'd with prayer. —
An eternal day before thee
Waits for God to guide thee there.”
GRANT.

THE LORD. “Whence comest
thou?”

The Soul. “Thou knowest: I come
from that grave.”

The Lord. “Whom didst thou find
there?”

The Soul. “Him for whom I
mourn.”

The Lord. “But he is with me in
heaven.”

The Soul. “And yet I found him
there, for he is with Thee and I found
Thee there.”

The Lord. "Wherefore didst thou think that I was there?"

The Soul. "Because Thou art everywhere; because Thou wast at the grave of Thy friend Lazarus; because Thou hast lain in the grave Thyself; because Thou lovest graves."

The Lord. "And didst thou weep?"

The Soul. "Thou, Thyself, didst weep when Thou wast here upon earth."

The Lord. "And didst thou weep only?"

The Soul. "I rejoiced also."

The Lord. "Wherefore?"

The Soul. "Because Thou wast there, and Thou art the Resurrection and the Life."

The Lord. "Didst thou think upon thine own death?"

The Soul. "How could I but think of it? Near the grave, a vacant place waits for me. I never see that grave, without thinking that I am to be buried close by it."

The Lord. “Thou hast thought of dying one day ; hast thou not also remembered that thou oughtest to be dead already ? ”

The Soul. “How meanest thou ? I still live.”

The Lord. “I mean that even here upon earth thou must die to the world.”

The Soul. “Alas, Lord ! I had not that thought, although it is the most important of all. Oh teach me to die to the world, that I may live to Thee.”





CHAPTER VI.

SLEEPLESSNESS.

“ O blessed are the eyes that see,
Though silent anguish show
The love that in their hours of sleep
Unthanked may come and go.
And blessed are the ears that hear,
Though kept awake by woe.”

MISS WARING.

THE SOUL. “It is far into the night,
and sleep flees from me, — sleep
which seems indispensable to strengthen
me for the morrow’s work. Oh, that
it would fold me in its soft, refreshing
embrace, and give me a few hours of
rest.”

The Lord. “Canst thou not watch
with me one hour?”

The Soul. “I thank Thee, O Lord,
for Thy gentle reminder; and I am
ashamed. We can always watch for

our pleasures or business, and yet it seems a hardship to watch with Thee, who dost always watch for us, and comest in the night hours to commune with us! I will not be so ungrateful. I will watch, and with Thee. I will commune with Thee, since Thou art here.

“One occupation succeeds another during the day, and we greet Thee hastily, as a friend whom we pass in the street. If friends wish to pour out their hearts to each other without reserve, what hours can they choose better than those of the night. So I will watch with Thee, Lord, although no anxious cares disturb my mind, no disease racks my limbs. I will delight in talking with Thee, as others may be doing at this very moment, less quietly and happily.

“These hours of the night are very trying to the sick, when the light is burning dimly. The nearest friends

have retired, leaving only the hired attendant, who perhaps falls asleep too, leaving them alone with their suffering and with Thee, while I am so quiet and comfortable.

“Thou who comest to me while I am well, wilt not forget Thy dear sick saints. Thou wilt be nearer to them than to me. Thou wilt send Thine angels to them.

“Those dear ministering spirits who are sent out to minister unto such as shall be heirs of salvation, how much they have to do around sick-beds in the night hours!

“Ought I to leave to them this ministry and not add mine by praying for the sick whom I know? O Lord, wilt Thou hear the prayers of Thine unworthy servant, and give unto all whom I name to Thee peace of mind, relief from pain, and a few hours of refreshing sleep!

“Grant this, not only to the sick but

also to the dying. Somewhere upon earth a soul is released from its body in every second of time. How many may have died since I began to talk with Thee! — even now one is dying. O Lord, Thou who art the Judge of the world, have mercy upon it and receive it into Thy glory!

“So shall I also lie, at some hour of night or day known only to Thee, at the gate of death. But Thou, O Lord, wilt be with me as Thou art now, only more perceptibly, more effectually — with greater treasures of comfort. Thou wilt not think upon my sins then, but of the moment which is as precious to Thee as to me, when Thou didst die for those sins. Thou wilt show them to me, but only to assure me that Thou hast blotted them out; and then, O merciful Saviour, full of everlasting compassion, Thou wilt receive my spirit into the kingdom of eternal joy.

“Often have I felt Thy presence

comforting me in times of bitter anguish. Thou knowest all that I felt, and how my peculiar trial brought in its train all the sufferings which can attack the human breast. What would have become of me then, but for Thee ! Thou wast with me ; Thou didst lovingly support my soul. When I think of those days, I weep, not so much at the recollection of my sufferings, as with gratitude for thy tender mercy and faithfulness.

“ As I consider Thy loving-kindness from my very infancy, my thoughts become songs of praise, for Thou hast known me to be very weak, and hast always shown me especial pity and forbearance. When I sinned Thou didst punish me, but the punishment was always a gentle though grave reminder ; the bruised reed was never broken, nor the smoking flax quenched. Often I was distracted with cares ; Thou didst let them remain for a while that they might bring me to Thee and exercise

me in prayer ; but many a time when I lay down to sleep in anxiety the good news knocked at my window early in the morning, and awaked me to thanksgivings. If I kept close to Thee with a true and constant heart, and sought Thee with single-minded perseverance, I received favor after favor. Impossible as it would be for me to forget this, I feel sure that Thou wilt bear me in Thine arms even to the end of life, and after giving me so much here wilt give me still more in heaven.

“ And now, O Lord, Thou knowest all my duties of the morrow ; Thou knowest also the measure of strength which I need to fulfil them, and Thou wilt strengthen me sufficiently by sleep. Yes, Thou dost take me in Thine arms, a cool breath from Thy Paradise is wafted to me, all thought resolves itself into a sweet sense of Thy love and mercy. I sleep.”



CHAPTER VII.

BODILY PAIN.

“ No suffering, while it lasts, is joy
How blest so e'er it be,
Yet may the chastened child be glad
His Father's face to see;
And oh, it is not hard to bear
What must be borne in Thee.”

MISS WARING.

I.

WHY should mental suffering look with scorn upon physical pain as if this were such a common evil as to be unaccompanied by spiritual blessings?

It is indeed a call to deeper spirituality when the heart is broken by the loss of wife or children, but do we not hear the voice of a chastening Father, when the flesh is pierced with the arrows of pain, urging us to cling more closely to Him?

Physical pain is like a beast of prey falling suddenly upon man, driving its teeth into his flesh and breaking all his bones. It is like successive blows of an iron rod dealt by a powerful hand until the body bows and trembles ; it is like a quiver full of fiery darts shooting through the limbs. As Jacob, when wounded in the thigh, in his night of wrestling, clung to his opponent, so hangs the sick man helpless upon the neck of his nurse. Then come moments when all sense and thought, all the light of the spirit, are extinguished in the night of exhaustion.

He who suffers in the body is reminded of Thy Cross, O Lord ! on which Thou didst endure the most severe pains, both of soul and body ; he is initiated into Thy sufferings ; he feels that his are like them, and while he realizes the infinite difference of degree in his agony, he knows it to be the same essentially.

Alas, how pain must have spread over Thy whole body, proceeding from each of Thy wounds ; and since Thou wert upheld by those wounded hands and feet, how it must have raged in Thy limbs, at Thy slightest movement, “ breaking all Thy bones ! ”

Wert Thou not tormented with thirst, that torture of all who are racked with physical pain ! Didst Thou not sink swooning into the hand of Thy Father, to whom Thou didst commend Thy Spirit ?

As the Cross itself is fashioned after the human form, so all pains to which man is subject may be included in those which Thou didst bear upon the Cross. Thus Thou hast sanctified them, by bearing them all.

II.

Well for him whom the Lord lays upon the bed of sickness, if he has a conscience at rest, and a heart at peace ;

if he is not tormented with the sins of his youth nor the misdeeds of later years, nor with the passions, whose strength is so great that it cannot be broken by sickness and death ! For sickness is a severe trial, and how much heavier it is if a sick man has an unreconciled conscience !

If sickness is not unto death, yet it is of death ; it arises from the one great source of human misery, which also will bring about the destruction of the body. Surely it has a connection with particular sins of commission, which were formerly unsuspected but have suddenly come to light.

Pain has a reminding power ; when one suffers one is forced to look into the past. The spirit searches into the reason of its being made to suffer this pain, and is not content until it can say, — Thou sufferest it because thou hast sinned.

Because thou hast sinned ! What

pain is there which these words do not explain, and how can any be explained without them ?

And what if the assembled misdeeds of a lifetime break forth as through newly opened water-gates, threatening to overwhelm the sick man with their flood, if he is drawn in and cast out again, first by their whirlpools and then by those of pain ! And if the last of these waves cast him into the ocean of eternity !

Who would wish to be overwhelmed in sickness and in death ? Whosoever would not be thus engulfed, let him believe in Christ.

I believe, O Lord, that Thou, by Thine agony of soul and body on the Cross, hast borne all my stripes ; that the past cannot injure me, even if it rings with cries of accusation ; and that my future holds those unutterable treasures of happiness which Thou hast won and laid up for me.

I may perhaps suffer much, and even groan aloud, when pain seizes me with all its power, yet in its intervals my heart is quiet and cheerful. I can pray, praise, and magnify God, as Paul and Silas praised and glorified God at midnight, although bruised with stripes, and with their feet set in the stocks, in the inner prison at Philippi.

III.

If we had no pain to bear, only weariness, and could sleep occasionally, waiting in an easy inactivity for illness to pass, and full health to return, patience would not be so hard a task.

But it is difficult to practise patience when tempted to spring and flee from the pain which stings so fiercely, and at the same time forces one to lie still and bear it. Those impracticable wishes and struggles rouse all the principles of life into rebellion ; the restraint is so

galling to the flesh, that the spirit murmurs and offends God by closing its eyes to His abundant mercy.

So did the malefactor on the Cross, at Thy left hand, O Lord, try to wrench the nails in the madness of his pain, but could only give himself the more agony.

But Thou, O Lord, didst hang patiently, not resisting the nails which held Thee, in the most painful of all attitudes.

Yet Thou wast not held by the nails ; for at Thy slightest wish the nails would have dropped from Thy limbs. Thy wounds would have been healed, and the earth would have spread for Thee a couch of herbs and flowers.

Thy great love to Thy Heavenly Father and to us miserable men ; that love which knew no other will than Thy Father's, which was that we might be saved ; that love was the source of all Thy patience ; that was the nail

which held Thee to the Cross, else all the gates of hell could not have brought Thee to it nor held Thee there.

I lie as upon thorns which wound me, whose sting I press deeper into my flesh at every motion. But I lie here according to Thy will, the will of Him who loves me, and who died for me. Shall I not love Him and His will? Shall I not lie still even if I quiver with pain? I will; O Lord, give me grace to be patient.

“ Give me a calm and thankful heart,
From every murmur free,
The blessings of Thy grace impart,
And make me live to Thee.”

IV.

Wilt thou still be so heavy, O my heart! It is easier for a man to be sad than thankful. But thank the Lord out of the depths, praise Him for His mercy, for through the mercy which He has shown me in this illness, it has be-

come one of the sweetest periods of my life.

While I lay tortured with pain, and deprived of all bodily strength, Thou, O Lord, hast vouchsafed me Thy presence in a wonderful way. Thought and feeling were not paralyzed, but rose to Thee in prayer.

I called upon Thee from necessity, and also from love, for had I not loved Thee a little, even necessity would not have enabled me to persevere in prayer.

Thou didst enable me to speak to Thee with confidence, and to utter those trifles which one might fear to tell to a man.

Innumerable petitions have I addressed to Thee ; and incredible as it seems, I testify before Thy face that every one of them has been heard, and without exception has been granted me.

I suffered, and was hindered in recovery, only when I did not recollect

to call upon Thee for guidance and assistance.

When I prayed fervently to Thee to make the difficult easy, the impossible possible, to arrest some almost inevitable catastrophe which would have renewed or aggravated my painful symptoms, to grant me as much refreshment, rest and sleep as I needed, Thou didst answer each time, — almost while I was speaking, Thou didst answer my prayer.

Art Thou a God who art afar off? Truly Thou art a God very near and very gracious. I could weep to think that Thou didst come from heaven to suffer agony for us, and if one of us lies ill, Thou comest to him, hearest all his sighs, and fulfillest all his petitions, changing his thorns into roses.

I have experienced Thy goodness, and I will acknowledge it, that so I may add one note to the song of praise which rings through the ages so power-

fully and yet so little understood. “The Lord is nigh unto all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him; He also will hear their cry and will save them!”

Thus have we drawn nigh to one another, O Lord, during this illness; may health, if Thou restore it, never separate us!

Oh that all my experiences of Thy love might ever float upon the stream of memory as fresh and loving as I see them now; and that they might return more vividly in my last sickness!

Thou who gavest me life, how often hast Thou given it to me anew! Now I receive it as a gift from Thy hands! To Thee be it consecrated! Amen.





CHAPTER VIII.

ANXIETY IN VIEW OF DEATH.

“I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight and fears no bitterness.
Where is Death’s sting? Where, Grave, thy victory?
I triumph still if Thou abide with me.
Hold, then, Thy Cross before my closing eyes:
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies:
Heaven’s morning breaks, and earth’s vain shadows
flee.
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.”

LYTE.

O LORD, why is it that when I think of death, — which in all human probability cannot be very far from me, — that the thought fills me with less of joy than of something like distress?

It is not that I am overwhelmed by the sins of my past life, and the fear that I must in consequence of them suffer dreadful punishment with the lost. I praise Thee, Lord, that Thou didst

once inspire in me this fear, and that Thou hast delivered me from it forever, through faith in Thy merits. Yes, Lord, my faith is strong; I know that I deserve pain and torment, but I know also that Thou hast suffered them for me; — I do not fear the judgment.

What is it, then, that I fear? Ah, Lord, when slavish fear vanishes, the anxiety of love takes its place. Thou, who didst give Thyself to death for me, hast also laid upon me dear and sacred obligations. Thou hast opened to me a sphere of service, appointing me a place wherein to work for Thy glory and for the good of my brethren. Soon, Lord, will my working-day be over; and I ask myself whether Thou wilt be satisfied with my work; whether Thou wilt pronounce me a faithful servant.

How shall I measure my faithfulness? According to the numerous opportunities of usefulness afforded me, or

according to my limited powers ? What I have accomplished is very little, but looking back upon my inward struggles, and the work, which in spite of my weakness has come upon me in an extraordinary measure, I could feel that though it is not much, yet it amounts to something. But am I sure that I have done all that I could ? Am I sure that with a firmer will, a more joyful confidence, I could not have broken the limits of my inability, and accomplished what seemed impossible ? No, I am not ; and because I do not know whether I have used every moment, since my life was consecrated to Thee, according to Thy will, I cannot but fear the moment of death.

Yet I will not fear it. I will silence fear with humility, and with a firm, joyful resolve. Thou knowest, O Lord, and I know, that I am the least of Thy servants, the least in all Thy kingdom. There is not one of Thy people to whom

I prefer myself, not one below whom I would not be willing to stand. With high-mindedness comes anxiety, but with humility comes peace. But mine shall be no false humility which only seeks to escape work by taking a lowly place. No, it shall be coupled with a firm, joyful resolve, which Thou dost give me, with a more strenuous activity than ever before. If these moments are few, I would yet be faithful in those few; and if much in my life displeases Thee, oh, may my last days please Thee!

What else do I fear when I think of death? Is it the loss of the earthly gifts which Thou hast bestowed on me? It is not just that, but something like it. There are minds—shall I call them earthly, or weak, or tender—which cling so closely to the places, the circumstances, the relations in which they were happy, even if only for a short time, that they cannot be separated

from them without pain. Such a mind is mine, Lord ; such attractions has earth for me ; and when I think of leaving them soon, my weak heart is full of sorrow.

But I confess to Thee, Lord, that though my heart has so easily received impressions, the impress of Thy love is the deepest. Loving many things here, I love Thee most. I have often felt it, and I shall feel it still more when Thou callest me to leave all and follow Thee. If I cast one tearful glance upon earth, Thou wilt pardon my weakness. Then will I follow Thee joyfully, not of necessity.

Is there nothing kept back ; have I told Thee all that troubles me ? There is one thing more — the agony which precedes death. It little befits me to ask Thee, who hast endured the pains of the Cross ; but how shall I, who have often been cowardly about slight physical suffering, be able to endure the

sharper pains which may then be appointed to me?

“Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

I thank Thee for Thy seasonable reminder. I was just giving way to a fault which I know to be one of mine, and which I have often tried to avoid, imagining future trials, and questioning if I shall have strength to bear them. It is folly, for perhaps the trial will never come; perhaps Thou hast appointed me a painless death. Perhaps it will seem very different from my anticipation, so that I shall be surprised that it is so easy to bear. And Thou, Lord, who sendest trials, dost also so speedily end them, that we are able to bear them: especially if we ask Thee with quiet confidence, instead of torturing ourselves with evil forebodings.

Where is now my uneasiness at the

idea of death ? It is gone. The heaviest burden becomes light, when we tell Thee of it. Should we not always be glad to tell Thee our troubles ? I thank Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast once more lovingly comforted me.





CHAPTER IX.

DISTRESS OF MIND.

“Break through the brambles and briers that obstruct thee;

Dread not the gloom and the blackness of night;
Lean on the hand that will safely conduct thee;
Trust to His eye to whom darkness is light.

“Earthliness, coldness, unthankful behavior,
Ah! thou may’st sorrow, but do not despair, —
Even this grief thou may’st bring to the Saviour,
Cast upon Him, e’en, this burden and care.”

ANON.

O LORD, to whom should I go but to Thee? Thou alone hast the words of eternal life. Even now I ask from Thy gracious lips a word of life to heal my soul, for it is restless and afraid.

And wherefore is it so with me? What has filled my mind with this disquietude? Is any one, dear to me, in danger of losing life and happiness?

Have I any great evil to fear for myself? No, dear Lord, it is a trifling circumstance, which admits of many favorable interpretations, but which perplexes me much. I know that this cloud will disperse, like many another which has filled me with similar anxieties, but meanwhile, I will turn unto Thee, and complain that my heart yields so easily to the first breath of temptation, instead of resting securely in Thy hands.

Alas, Lord, Thou knowest, that of the many sufferings to which we have become subject through our sins, distress of mind is one of the worst. In former days, when I was a stranger to Thee, how it surged and raged within me like an angry sea! Even now, that I have been awakened to believe in Thee and to love Thee, I have not yet attained to freedom from this torment.

Even so, Lord, if the storm drives me on toward Thee. When I am safe with Thee in heaven, this will

be no more. Then shall I hear from Thy mouth, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" I shall enter in, and this joy will not be clouded like the joys of earth, with the fear of change, but will bring with it the assurance of its continuance. There, too, I shall see the fate of my dear ones, sure, through Thy mercy, for time and for eternity. None whom I love will be far from me, so that I need say, What is he doing, how does he prosper; what news shall I have of him? I shall see them all near me, even if they dwell upon earth, for my eyes will then be opened. I shall see how they are led by Thine hand, and how, by that gracious hand, the injuries which their trials and even their errors might bring upon them are averted.

But here in this poor transitory life, I am still far from this rest of soul; I am kept out of it chiefly by sin. Oh, if I were sure that I had never offended

Thee, sure that I should not offend Thee again so often, true peace would take up its abode in my heart; but the consciousness of my early, my later, and my continuing train of transgressions, deprives me of this blessed guest.

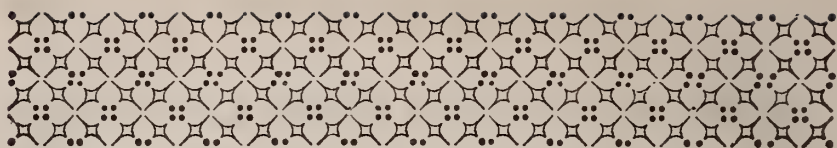
I am not without sin, yet I am deeply penitent. The confession of my sins will give me the peace which I cannot have from a sense of innocence. Yes, Lord, there is a way of attaining peace through Thy grace, by bewailing our sins before Thee. I do now mourn afresh those sins which I have so often mourned; and while I confess that I am unworthy of Thy love and favor, I feel a returning hope that Thou wilt grant them to me.

Now I commend to Thy care my own troubles, as well as the souls and the trials of those whom I love. In former times I have asked for them many unnecessary blessings. Now I ask only one thing, — their eternal welfare.

I am certain that Thou dost always grant this prayer, and that Thou wilt now grant it, and in it every thing is included.

Yes, Lord, I commit myself, my heart, and all to which it clings into Thy true, Thy loving, Thy Almighty hand. And now that I have given up all to Thee, let whatever Thou wilt occur, I can quietly await it, for it will be good. Amen.





CHAPTER X.

SPIRITUAL JOY.

“And love shall teach us, while on Him we lean,
That in the certainty of coming bliss
We may be yearning for a world unseen,
Yet wear our beautiful array in this.”

MISS WARING.

BEHOLD the stillness of the lake :
a light breeze ripples its surface,
and the sunbeams from cloudless heav-
ens penetrate its clear depths.

Tranquil as this lake is my soul,
gentle as the waves are its emotions,
for the sun of joy is searching its inmost
depths.

No incidental circumstance has
brought this sudden and mighty tide
of joy into my heart, but because it
comes from nothing without, but from
Thee alone, O Lord, and from Thy
grace-giving presence, so much the
brighter is the joy.

Oh, that I could tell Thee how infinitely rich, how blessed Thou hast made me all at once !

In this overflowing abundance of spiritual blessing, all worldly wishes, which I should otherwise cherish, have disappeared. If I must choose, I would prefer the mean things of earth to its glory ; for worldly glory is so opposed to Thee, that I could serve Thee more safely and freely in a low estate.

How often do we see a cloud interposed between the sun and the earth, which it lights and beautifies, so that we see a dark gloomy shadow drawn over the lately brilliant streams and meadows.

Will thy beams, O my Sun, which now irradiate my soul, be also soon obscured by such a dark cloud veiling me with the gloom of former days ?

The Lord. “ How can the friends of the bridegroom mourn while the bridegroom is with them ? But the

days will come when the bridegroom is taken from them ; then shall they fast and mourn."

Truly how can they mourn ? Would they not grieve Him by so doing ? Does it not beseem them to use the time of the divine visitation according to the meaning of Him who so graciously comes to thee ? Be thou zealous in prayer, O my soul, using these wings, which the Lord lendeth thee, to soar continually before His face.

O Word of God, open to me thy golden mines. The eternal Word of God is by my side, and He will reveal them to me.

Is there a sufferer to comfort, a poor man to care for ; is there any hard yet necessary work to be done for the Lord ? Up, quickly, O my soul, now that thou hast the power and the will to work ; to-morrow both may have vanished.

Vanished ! Alas, what a sad word,

my Lord ! Thou gone and I alone
again !

The Lord. “ Does the sun depart
because a cloud — a cloud conceals it ?
My glory may indeed leave thee, but I
never leave thee.”





CHAPTER XI.

GOOD FRIDAY EVENING.

“ Victorious sign !
That now dost shine,
Transcribed above,
Into the land of light and love !
Oh, let us twine
Our roots with Thine,
That we may rise
Upon Thy wings and reach the skies ! ”

R. CRASHAW.

THE SOUL. “ It was not enough for Thee, my Lord, to watch over us and direct our ways from on high ; to send us rain and sunshine, and to adorn our lives with many gifts which bring us joy. Thou didst choose to share the bitterness of our lot, which we deserved, — the pains of temporal and eternal death, — in order to free us from the latter. And Thou hast given to us Thy body and Thy blood for our spirit-

ual sustenance, so that the least among Christians can receive the fulness of Christ, and are thus more highly favored than the holy angels.

“ This love which led Thee not only to shower gifts upon Thy beloved ones, but also constrained Thee to enter into fellowship with their bitter shame and sorrow ; this love which Thou, the eternal Son of God, the Creator and Ruler of the world, hast felt for us, miserable sinners, who lay prostrate in the dust ; this love, when I try to consider it, looms up before me like an immense structure, whose height and depth my eyes cannot compass ; and while Thy might has no limits, Thy wisdom no bounds, yet Thy love seems to me still more unfathomable.”

The Lord. “ Simon, son of Jona, lovest thou me ? ”

The Soul. “ When I have praised Thy love, O Lord, dost Thou question my love to Thee ? Must I turn from

Thee to me ; from the infinite to the finite, from the Lord to poor sinning man ? Wherefore dost Thou desire it ? When I contemplate Thee, I cannot notice any thing else, least of all myself."

The Lord. "Simon, son of Jona, lovest thou me ?"

The Soul. "Dost Thou ask me again, O Lord ? Must I straightway answer Thee ? Why may I not leave the question unanswered ? The child rests on the lap of its mother ; it sleeps on her breast, it throws itself into her arms when it is frightened. But whether it loves its mother it neither asks itself, nor is asked. Let me be such a child, and ask me not."

The Lord. "Simon, son of Jona, lovest thou me ?"

The Soul. "Lord, Thou knowest all things. I answer Thee as Peter did. Thou dost ask me something which I would fain ask Thee. I would ask

Thee if I love Thee, for Thou must know whether Thou lovest Thyself in me. I, myself, cannot know.

“All that I do know I will tell Thee. I know that it is my highest aim, that I should consider myself immeasurably happy, to love Thee as Thou art worthy of being loved. I know that I envy those who feel the flame of this love here on earth, to whom it has become the life of their life, who act only from its impulses, and consume themselves in its sacred fire. I know that I have the will to love Thee. I know also that in heaven, and in earth, in the whole universe, there is but one aim towards which I press; only one whom I seek, and Thou art that One. It is Thou, Jesus of Nazareth, born in Bethlehem, who didst suffer under Pontius Pilate, who wast crucified, and on the Cross didst break out in these words, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!’ That

sentence breathes of Thee alone, and by it Thou art plainly known. Thee will I seek, by Thy grace helping me, and none other will I seek. If any change comes over my life, I will ever try it with the following queries: —

“ ‘What art thou? Where shall I find myself, if I follow thy lead!’ If I am placed in new relations towards men, I will say, ‘Seek ye the Lord, else I cannot go with you.’ When Death calls me, I will reply, ‘I follow thee gladly, for thou bringest me to Christ.’

“I long also that all whom I love should come to Thee. I have not dared to say that I love Thee, but perhaps I may say that I love them, for I wish them Thy salvation. O thou dear heart of my Redeemer, which wast pierced for my sins, be open to my prayer, and through Thy mighty power cause all whom I name to Thee to seek Thee with ceaseless zeal and inviolable fidel-

ity ! And then, let us all find Thee. Let us one day behold the face of our Redeemer, and kiss the feet which were nailed to the Cross for us. This is now my only request. Once I cherished so many wishes ; now that they have vanished, oh, may they never return ! Even pious men find so many things to wish for on earth : they wish, at the least, to work for Thee on earth, and so honor Thee ; but is it not enough to be loved by Thee and to strive to live near to Thee ! Let me bear scorn and shame, but by Thy decree, and not by my fault, and I will not murmur.

“ I wish to come to Thee, and, happy man, I shall. The pilot guides his bark with care and perplexity toward a haven which he often misses ; but I embark in the ship of faith, and if I say merely ‘ I wish to go to the Lord,’ lo, the ship flies in the desired direction ; the breeze of free grace swells the sail, and I come to Him whom I seek, to the only place where I would be, — I come to Thee.”

The Lord. “ I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me.”

The Soul. “ Truly Thou art the goal, and Thou art also the way to it ! So is a stream the goal, and the way, too. When the stream flows into the sea, where the Son sits at the right hand of the Father, thither would I go. To arrive there I launch my bark upon the stream which is my way, not only a way which I follow, but which bears me on to my destined haven. So I come to Thee through Thee ! Thou ledest me and Thou bearest me to my journey’s end ! ”





CHAPTER XII.

BEFORE THE LORD'S SUPPER.

“ Oh dear memorial of that death
Which still survives and gives us breath,
Live ever, Bread of Life, and be
My food, my joy, my all to me!
Come, glorious Lord, my hopes increase,
And mix my portion with Thy peace!
Come, and forever dwell in me,
That I may only live to Thee.”

R. CRASHAW.

O LORD, Thou hast said in Thy Word, “ Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me.” So hast Thou knocked at the door of my heart and hast bidden me approach Thy holy table. From Thee has the invitation come, and I have followed it ; but while I have not resisted Thy grace, I do not feel the devotion, the

collectedness of soul, the holy desire with which so sacred a rite must be kept. Therefore I come before Thy face, and ask Thee to prepare me for it, for I cannot prepare myself; and I can only ask for Thy aid by the impulse of the Spirit. The wish and the fulfilment still come from Thee. It is Thy gift if we live aright, act aright, suffer aright, die aright. It is also Thy gift, if we rightly receive what Thou dost offer us in Thy Supper. Oh, bring all the powers of my soul in harmony, that none be absent or sluggish, but that they may all with one consent turn toward Thee and Thy heavenly gifts.

How gladly would I to-day keep the feast in a manner pleasing to Thee and helpful to myself! How gladly would I to-day be kept from the sins of which I have so often been guilty at this holy feast! The first time that I approached Thy table, how little I knew what I did; how little I recognized the

magnitude of Thy love and mercy ; how little of it I had experienced in my newly converted heart ! How seldom have I come to the Sacrament from a hearty feeling of need ! Have I always there confessed to Thee my sins with deep pain and with fervent desire ? Have I passed sufficient time *in the reading of Thy word*, in *prayer*, in the examination of my state of soul, and of my duties ? Have I not often come to Thy holy table with my mind full of worldly affairs, and almost, as soon as I had left it, been drawn again into their whirlpool ? Have I not thus lost the blessing which Thou gavest me, in spite of my scanty preparation, and which I might have kept ? Oh, that I might to-day, and as often as I celebrate Thy Supper here on earth, avoid these great failures and sins ! Oh, that I might to-day, and from now on evermore, consider Thy heavenly gifts with faith and emotion, receive them with

an open heart, and keep them faithfully !

Oh, my Lord, what tongue can express the richness of these gifts ; what created mind can fathom the secret of Thy Supper ! “*Take, eat,*” Thou sayest, “this is my body which was broken for you.” “Drink ye all of it ; this cup is the new testament in my blood.” Thy body which was broken on the Cross, which is risen and with which Thou hast ascended into heaven, Thy blood which flowed from Thy wounds, wilt Thou give these to me ? I cannot understand it ; I am astonished. I feel myself shaken to the depths of my heart ; but Thou hast said it, Thou hast promised it : therefore I believe it. Oh, Thou hast indeed died, out of love to us. Thou hast given Thy body to death for us. Why should not Thou, who art almighty, be able to leave to us Thy body in Thy Sacrament ; and where Thy body is, art Thou not Thy-

self? Canst Thou give Thy body without giving Thyself? Lord, whither leadest Thou me? From one height, from one depth, to the other! Yes, it is Thyself! Thou, whom to see in heaven is my blessed hope! Thou, whom the angels praise with veiled face! It is Thou whom I am about to receive! Thou wilt come to me with Thy Father and make Thine abode with me! Oh, strengthen me; let me not sink in the deep sense of my unworthiness! Let me only grasp some part of this mystery! Thou wilt give me Thy body! Thou wilt come to me, and make me one with Thee! Does not this mean that Thou takest away all the stripes which I have deserved for my sins, by Thine omnipotent, gracious, saving presence? For how can he be punished who becomes one with Thee? Does it not mean that between me and that world of light and holiness, there has been a closer bond drawn, and that the door of my

heart shall be opened to its saving power? Does it not mean that Thou wilt live in me, so that I may also live in Thee?

But now, O Lord! I can no longer gaze into the depths of Thy mercy; and I yield to the call to look into the abyss of my own sin and misery. Let every one examine himself, says Thy Apostle, warningly. Alas, who needs not to examine himself, when he stands before Thee, and when Thou comest to receive him into communion with Thee! Who should not, by Thy light, clearly recognize his own darkness! Alas, how could I help fixing my eyes upon my sins? No, I will not conceal one of them from Thee. Thou hast seen them. Thou seest them now. Thou seest more than I see. Forgive me also my secret sins! Since they are all known to Thee, it will be easier for me to confess them to Thee. Why should I not tell Thee what Thou knowest already?

It will be easier to me, it will be possible to me to confess them to Thee, because Thou wilt forgive them. Before a judge who threatened punishment I might have denied or concealed them, but before the Redeemer I let the tears of repentance flow unrestrained. Oh, unspeakable sorrow, most worthy of tears, that I have wounded the loving heart of my Saviour! How much I have offended my brethren! With what intolerable burdens have I laden my own heart! How many innocent joys, which were prepared for me, have I lost and trodden under foot! What judgments would come upon me, if, when sin was powerful, Thy grace were not more so? Even the fate of those who, eternally banished from Thy presence, are tortured by the worm which never dieth and the fire which is never quenched! The second death cannot harm me, for *Thou* hast died. *It shall have no power over me,*

saith Thy word, and so saith also Thy broken body, broken for me, which I am about to receive. Lord, I have indeed sinned deeply, but I will not hesitate, I will not reject Thy mercy ; I will not believe the enemy of my soul who whispers that I could do without it. Thou wilt reconcile me, my heavenly Father. I will let myself be reconciled. Thou offerest me pardon, and I accept it. Merit of my own I have not, but I have Thine ; so I come spotless to Thy feast, decked in Thy righteousness.

How I hate, Lord, the sins which Thou hast pardoned, and by which I have been guilty of Thy bitter passion and death ! How I long to abandon them ! How I long to resemble Thee, whom I love, in Thy holiness. How gladly would I in future combat my depraved desires, and walking in the way of life never more leave it ; I would fain work in my appointed place to

Thine honor, and for the good of my neighbor, with more joyful perseverance. I would fain have a tenderer feeling for my fellow-men, and be always ready to bear their infirmities, to forgive their trespasses, to rejoice in their happiness, to assist their necessities with the fruits of self-denial. Would that this fearful coldness, which I usually feel toward Thee, my heavenly Father, toward Thee my Redeemer, might be replaced by fervent love. Would that I might always feel a desire for prayer, and joy in reading Thy Word; that I might always walk before Thee and with Thee; this is Thy will for me also. Thou art willing to fulfil in me what I wish, for Thou drawest my heart and bindest it to Thine. Oh grant me, that I may receive and retain what Thou givest me, and that I may not let Thy rich blessings slip again.

Often, dear Lord, have I come to

Thy holy table with a heavy heart, and always hast Thou fulfilled Thy gracious promise, that Thou wouldst refresh all the weary and heavy laden if they would come to Thee. If I thought that some calamity threatened me and mine, Thy table appeared to me a city of refuge, where fear and care fled, and where I felt myself secure in Thy hands. When death robbed me of those dearest to me, Thou didst favor me then with a keener vision into Thine invisible world, so that with the eye of faith I could see Thee, and at Thy right hand those for whom I mourned. I am no longer one of those who are driven hither and thither by the storms of life, for after many tempests, Thou hast let a still, bright day rise for me. For this I praise Thee, and will praise Thee in Thy temple, at Thy feet; also for the comfort and help which I have received from Thee in tribulation! But Lord,

while I count myself among the happy, I am also weary and heavy-laden, burdened with the miseries of this life which lead me to sigh for release. O Lord, listen now to my dearest, most secret, most fervent wishes. Since I have so often prayed for their fulfilment, why should I not now, while I feast upon Thy Body and Blood, in this moment of grace, when no believing soul can but be heard. O Lord, give me, when the appointed time comes, a gentle, happy death. Grant me in heaven, with Thy chosen ones, the vision of Thy glory! Grant me then a joyful meeting with my dear ones. Keep them and me, while we live on earth, from heavy sorrows and trials. Give me the strength and the means to serve Thee, to edify my brethren, and to help some of Thy needy children. Grant that those with whom I live may bear with me, with my faults and infirmities, and if I have committed a trespass

against them, may they pardon me; and may I always enjoy the happiness of being loved by some good men for Thy sake.

I pray not only for myself, but also for all who partake of Thy feast to-day. There are amongst them, as Thou knowest, some very dear souls closely bound to me with the bands of kindred, love, and friendship. Oh, that Thou wouldst grant to them in tenfold measure the blessings which I have implored for myself! Be pleased to give to each of them the special gifts which I ask for each, according to their necessities of which I know. May Thy grace be richly poured upon all who eat the same bread with us, and drink of the same cup. May none amongst them, even were they hundreds, receive Thy holy sacrament unworthily, to his soul's hurt and condemnation. If any one has sinned, however deeply, may he repent that sin with bitter tears, and

be justified in Thy sight through faith ! Is there the least shade of bitterness in any heart ? Oh, melt it now and change it into love ! Yes, Lord, may love, pure, holy love, fill the hearts of those who approach Thee to-day, as it fills the hearts of those who are assembled before Thee in heaven ; and may we all who celebrate Thy Supper here to-day meet again at Thy board in heaven !

So will I approach Thy sacred table, O Lord ! May it be to me according to Thy promise. Thou didst promise to give me Thy Body and Thy Blood, and I expect to receive Thy Body and Thy Blood, even Thyself. What gift in heaven and earth could be greater ? What moment is more sacred, more sublime than that in which we partake of these holy symbols ? Let me enjoy the blessedness of that moment aright ! Keep me from all evil, wandering thoughts ; I abhor them ; and because I abhor them, I know that they cannot harm

me, even if they come. May I think upon Thee, may I look steadfastly unto Thee, that seeing Thee only, the whole world may be hidden to me, for in Thee I possess the world! Give me if it please Thee, some emotion, a few blessed tears ; if not, give me deep devotion and whole-souled earnestness. Hearken and grant all the many prayers which Thy spirit will make in my heart with unutterable sighs. Come to abide in me, Lord ; come into my heart. It is a poor sinful heart ; but consecrate it to be Thy dwelling, Thy temple ; may this abode please Thee ; mayest Thou never leave it, but abide in it through time and through eternity. Amen.

THE END.

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